

Message Text

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S E C R E T JIDDA 8358

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SA, EG,US

SUBJECT: SAUDI TRAINING OF EGYPTIAN PILOTS

1. I HAD A LONG AND GENERALLY UPBEAT MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRINCE SULTAN THIS MORNING, DETAILS OF WHICH I WILL BE REPORTING SEPARATELY. THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH, NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, GENERATED SOME HEAT ON HIS PART WAS OUR REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION OF SAUDI F-5 TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EGYPTIAN PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE TECHNICIANS.

2. SULTAN'S REACTION WAS THAT SAUDIS THOUGHT THEY WERE DOING WHAT WE WANTED THEM TO. HE ALSO ASKED WHY, IF WE HAD PROBLEMS WITH THIS PROGRAM, WE HAD WAITED SO LONG TO TELL THEM. I EXPLAINED AT LENGTH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S PROBLEMS IN TRYING TO DIVERSIFY HIS SOURCES OF MILITARY SUPPLY, NOTING THAT SADAT HAD PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH U.S., THAT WE HAD AGREED THIS WAS A SUBJECT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO DISCUSS BUT THAT WE HAD MADE NO SPECIFIC DECISIONS. I POINTED OUT NEED FOR CAREFUL CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTATION AND OUR CONCERN THAT SAUDI TRAINING PROGRAM WOULD BE MISINTERPRETED AS MEANING THAT WE HAD MADE COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE F-5'S TO EGYPT WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE LONG-

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TERM OBJECTIVES OF BROADENING U.S.-EGYPTIAN COOPERA-

TION AND WORKING TOGETHER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. I POINTED OUT THAT CONGRESS HAS INTEREST IN SUCH TRAINING PROGRAMS INVOLVING AIRCRAFT SOLD TO SAUDI ARABIA BY USG AND THAT SUCH PROGRAM COULD RAISE LEGAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PROCEDURES GOVERNING AGREED USE OF U.S.-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, WE THOUGHT IT BEST THAT PRESENT PROGRAM BE SUSPENDED, AND I WOULD BE MAKING SAME POINTS IN CAIRO TOMORROW.

3. SULTAN MADE THREE POINTS. FIRST, HE ASKED ME TO TELL YOU THAT HIS RECOMMENDATION WAS THAT WE NOT RAISE THIS MATTER IN CAIRO, WHICH HE FEARED WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECT ON PRESIDENT SADAT. SECOND, HE ASKED IF AT MINIMUM IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO LET THOSE EGYPTIANS PRESENTLY IN TRAINING COMPLETE THEIR COURSES. (ACCORDING TO USMTM CHIEF GENERAL AHMANN, TRAINING FOR SIX EGYPTIAN PILOTS WILL BE COMPLETED MID-APRIL AND CAN BE DONE WITHOUT INVOLVING U.S. INSTRUCTORS. TRAINING FOR NINE TECHNICIANS WILL ALSO END ABOUT MID-APRIL AND CAN BE CONDUCTED ENTIRELY BY SAUDIS ONCE THEY COMPLETE PRESENT NORTHROP-CONDUCTED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING, WHICH ENDS MID-JANUARY.) THIRD, SULTAN SAID THAT IF PROGRAM WAS TO BE TERMINATED, THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE AT EGYPTIAN REQUEST; IT WOULD BE INFRINGEMENT ON SAUDI SOVEREIGNTY TO ASK THEM TO TAKE INITIATIVE.

4. DESPITE SULTAN'S REACTION, I HAVE IMPRESSION HE WAS NOT UNPREPARED FOR THIS APPROACH AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH SAUDIS PROVIDED EGYPTIANS TAKE THE INITIATIVE. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD GO THROUGH WITH DECISION TO ASK THAT PROGRAM BE SUSPENDED BUT WANTED YOU TO KNOW OF SULTAN'S REACTION, AND OF HIS OPTION OF LETTING PRESENT PROGRAM RUN ITS COURSE, BEFORE I APPROACH EGYPTIANS SUNDAY. I WILL PROCEED ON THIS BASIS (I.E., ASK EGYPTIANS THAT PROGRAM BE DISCONTINUED FOR NOW) UNLESS I RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CONTRARY.

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5. I SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO CAIRO FOR ANY COMMENTS AMBASSADOR EILTS MAY HAVE.
HORAN

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